

# News from Congressman Gil Gutknecht

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 25, 2002

## House members press for affordable pharmaceuticals

*Washington, D.C.* - Today, Congressmen Gil Gutknecht, Jack Kingston and Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson announced the formation of the Republican Caucus for Affordable Pharmaceuticals.

“Addressing prescription drug coverage without addressing cost is like constructing a house without building a solid foundation,” said Gutknecht.

Gutknecht, a strong advocate for re-importation, stressed the importance of allowing market forces to reign in the rising costs of prescription drugs. “Prescription drug prices are out of control. Americans are the world’s largest consumers of prescription drugs and we pay the world’s highest prices,” said Gutknecht. “In contrast, Europeans pay 30 to 200 percent less for the same drugs, made in the same FDA-approved facilities. That isn’t right.” Gutknecht’s measure passed 324 to 101 in the House in 2001, but was not taken up in the Senate.

Emerson, a long-time advocate for generic drug options, stated, “Promoting alternatives to high-price brand name drugs by increasing the availability of generic alternatives is critical to getting drugs into the hands of people who need them -- without breaking the bank. General Motors, one of the largest insurers in the US, spends nearly \$1 million a week on prescriptions for just one brand name drug. When GM spokesperson Robert Minton says, ‘Our cost would probably be one-tenth of that once generics are on the market.’ I take that as a pretty clear sign that there is a growing movement of people, from corporate America, to small mom and pop businesses to seniors’ organizations who strongly believe that no discussion about prescription drugs will be complete without talking about the use of generic drugs.”

“Home-town pharmacists need to have options,” said Kingston. “If we don’t help them address price, consumers will be forced to make other choices.”

A newly formed organization, the Republican Caucus for Affordable Pharmaceuticals’ goal is to address the cost factor of the prescription drug equation. “We invite all of our fiscally conscious colleagues to join us in the effort to pursue common sense solutions to this problem,” said Gutknecht.

Re-importation and generic alternatives are among the options being discussed by caucus members.

“Once we deal with price, we’ll be in a much stronger position to deal with coverage,” said Gutknecht.